

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 06687 312051Z

15

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
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INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
USCINCSO
PANCANAL

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 6687

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PN

SUBJECT: TORRIJOS IN BOLIVIA AND PERU

REF: A. LIMA 8858 B. PANAMA 6649

SUMMARY. TORRIJOS' OCTOBER 24-27 VISIT TO BOLIVIA AND PERU RECEIVED HEAVY COVERAGE IN ALL PANAMA PRESS AND NEWS MEDIA. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE TRIP INCLUDE: PANAMA'S AND BOLIVIA'S MUTUAL SUPPORT FOR EACH OTHER'S TERRITORIAL CAUSES, AGREEMENT ON SEVERAL MINOR MEASURES OF COOPERATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN PANAMA AND BOLIVIA, PERU'S RESTATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR PANAMA ON CANAL ISSUE, AND ACCEPTANCE OF TORRIJOS' PERSONAL INVITATION TO PERUVIAN AND BOLIVIAN HEADS OF STATE FOR NEXT YEAR'S LATIN AMERICAN HEADS OF STATE CONFERENCE IN PANAMA. JOURNEY BUTTRESSED TORRIJOS' DESIRE TO PORTRAY HIMSELF AS HEMISPHERIC FIGURE AND PROSELYTIZE CANAL ISSUE AS "RELIGION OF THE AMERICAS".

1. HEADLINES AND FRONT-PAGE PHOTOGRAPHS REPORTED STATEMENTS,
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PAGE 02 PANAMA 06687 312051Z

COMMUNIQUE, CEREMONIES AND SOCIAL FRILLS OF HEAD OF GOVERNMENT,

GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS' AND HIS PARTY'S FOUR DAY VISIT TO BOLIVIA AND PERU. COVERAGE OF VISIT HAS BEEN VERY FAVORABLE FROM ALL QUARTERS OF PANAMANIAN NEWS MEDIA.

2. SALIENT ACHIEVEMENT FOR PANAMA WAS REITERATION OF SUPPORT FROM BOLIVIA AND PERU FOR IT VIS-A-VIS CANAL ISSUE. BOLIVIA'S SUPPORT WAS PARTICULARLY WELCOME, AS RECTOR OF UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA, ROMULO ESCOBAR PUT IT, IN LIGHT OF THE TWO NATIONS "SIMILAR REVINDICATORY ASPIRATIONS". IN EXCHANGE FOR BOLIVIAN STATEMENT OF SUPPORT, PANAMA RESTATED ITS SUPPORT FOR LATTER'S OUTLET TO THE SEA. OTHER BILATERAL ITEMS AGREED TO WITH BOLIVIA WERE: MUTUAL CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN BOTH COUNTRIES' UNITED NATIONS REPRESENTATIVES ON MATTERS OF INTEREST TO LATIN AMERICA, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SYSTEM OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL INTERCHANGE OF INFORMATION (PRIMARILY, BOLIVIA WILL GIVE PANAMA ADVICE ON MINING), FACILITATION OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION- PANAMA WILL GIVE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION TO LLOYD BOLIVIAN AIRLINES FOR AIR TRAFFIC RIGHTS IN PANAMA (FIFTH LIBERTY RIGHTS) FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS. (FULL TEXT OF TORRIJOS-BANZER COMMUNIQUE BEING POUCHED ARA/PAN)

3. MORALES BERMUDEZ AND TORRIJOS IN TANDEM CONDEMNED TRANS-NATIONAL COMPANIES INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF SOVEREIGN STATES EMPHASIZED IMPORTANCE OF NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT AMONG OTHER POINTS PLEASING TO PERU. (SEE REF. A)

4. BOTH BOLIVIA AND PERU ACCEPTED TORRIJOS PERSONAL INVITATION TO ATTEND JUNE 1976 LATIN AMERICAN HEADS OF STATE MEETING IN PANAMA. PANAMA PLACES GREAT IMPORTANCE ON THAT CONFERENCE AND IS TENDERING HIGH-LEVEL INVITATIONS TO ITS THROUGHOUT LATIN AMERICA. (SEE REF. B)

5. TORRIJOS' FREQUENT FORAYS TO OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES BUILD HIM UP AS HEMISPHERIC FIGURE IN PANAMANIAN EYES. HIS CONSULTATIONS WITH FOREIGN CHIEFS OF STATE ENHANCE HIS OWN PRESTIGE, AND THEREBY PANAMA'S PRESIDENT LAKAS, IN HIS OCTOBER 11 ADDRESS CHARACTERIZED PANAMA'S STRUGGLE FOR THE CANAL AS A "PANAMANIAN, AND NOW LATIN AMERICAN RELIGION". OMAR TORRIJOS IS THE PRINCE OF THAT CREED'S APOSTLES. AND, OF COURSE, THE CENTRAL TENET OF THE FAITH IS ACHIEVEMENT OF NATIONAL DIGNITY--PERFECTION
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PAGE 03 PANAMA 06687 312051Z

OF PANAMANIAN INDEPENDENCE.

6. TORRIJOS' TRAVELLING GRANTS HIM, IN ADDITION, THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE COURSE OF THE CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS FROM A FOREIGN PLATFORM. THE IMPACT OF POLITICALLY SENSITIVE STATEMENTS, PARTICULARLY NOW WITH RESPECT TO TIMING OF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, ON HIS DOMESTIC PUBLIC IS LESSENER WHEN FILTERED BY DISTANCE. FOR EXAMPLE, HE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING IN SANTA CRUZ: "WE MUST

KEEP UP A CERTAIN OPTIMISM IN THE NEGOTIATIONS EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT MOVING AS FAST AS THEY DID UP TO A SHORT WHILE AGO. BUT THERE IS THE DETERMINATION TO ARRIVE AT A GOOD AGREEMENT WITHIN A SHORT TIME."

EVEN MORE SPECIFICALLY, TORRIJOS PLACED A TWO YEAR TIME LIMIT ON TREATY NEGOTIATIONS IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE WITH PRESIDENT BANZER. THAT TIME FRAME WOULD TIDE THE U.S. OVER NEXT YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. TORRIJOS WILL NOW WAIT TO SEE WHAT KIND OF FEEDBACK HE RECEIVED ON THAT FORECAST FROM HIS VARIOUS DOMESTIC CONSTITUENCIES. EMBASSY REGARDS THESE STATEMENTS AS HELPFUL IN MAINTAINING TRANQUIL ENVIRONMENT FOR NEGOTIATION. TORRIJOS PERCEIVES SUCH STATEMENTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO FOSTER DISAGREEMENT OR FURTHER DOMESTIC RESTIVENESS OVER NEGOTIATING PACE WHEN UTTERED OUTSIDE PANAMA.

6. TORRIJOS, AND HIS "REVOLUTION", HAVE BEEN CREATING A NEW PANAMANIAN "IDENTITY". PANAMA, IN ITS AND OTHERS EYES, HAS BEEN CONSIDERED A CREATURE OF THE UNITED STATES, RESPONSIVE TO OUR BECK AND CALL. PANAMA'S PRESENT LEADERS ARE BENDING OVER BACKWARDS TO DISABUSE ANY AND ALL OBSERVERS OF THE JUSTICE OF THAT FORMER CHARACTERIZATION. PANAMA'S CAMPAIGN FOR DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT, HER QUEST FOR SOLIDARITY FROM HER LATIN AMERICAN NEIGHBORS, HER INSATIABLE APPETITE FOR FAVORABLE RESOLUTIONS FROM GROUPS, CONFERENCES AND ASSEMBLIES TESTIFY TO THE DEPTH OF HER FELT NEED TO ERADICATE-THAT CHARACTERIZATION. AS IN ANY QUEST FOR SELF-DEFINITION, THE STRIVING FOR IT COMPRISES THE GOAL; TORRIJOS' JOURNEYS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THIS SEARCH FOR, AND ASSERTION OF, A NEW IDENTITY, AND AN ENHANCED DIGNITY FOR PANAMA.

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